

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached sheets of drawings include changes to **FIGS. 1- 5**.

Replacement Sheet 1 which includes **FIGS. 1 and 2** replaces the original sheet including **FIGS. 1 and 2**, and now provides clean formal drawings.

Replacement Sheet 2 which includes **FIGS. 3, 4 and 5** replaces the original sheet including **FIGS. 3, 4 and 5**, and now provides clean formal drawings.

In particular, the Examiner had noted that reference numerals **32 (FIG. 4)**, **34 (FIG.4)** and **72 (FIG. 5)** should be underlined. This has been corrected. In addition, **FIG. 5** included stray lines, which have been removed.

Attachment: Replacement Sheets 1 and 2

Remarks/Arguments

Claims 1-14 remain pending in the application. Reconsideration and reexamination are requested.

Independent claims 1 and 13 have been amended to recite that the connector platform has an outer surface and “wherein each outer cover portion connector portion is disposed along a respective joint line edge of said each cover portion and includes a plurality of receptacles and said first and second connector portions of said connector platform include a plurality of protrusions, and said protrusions engage said receptacles _ wherein said inner surfaces of said first and second cover portion contact said outer surface of said connector platform.”

Claims 5 and 8 have been amended to recite that the outer cover includes inner surfaces and that the connector platform includes an outer surface “wherein each outer cover includes a connector portion, said connector portion disposed along a respective joint line edge of each outer cover and formed therein, said outer cover connector portions including a plurality of receptacles, wherein said connector platform includes first and second connector portions which include a plurality of protrusions, and said protrusions engage said receptacles wherein said inner surfaces of said first and second cover portion contact said outer surface of said connector platform.”

Support may be found at page 25 lines 24-30 of the application which recite “[e]ach outer cover portion **18, 20** preferably comprises a plurality of receptacles **22, 24**, respectively. As shown, receptacles **22, 24** comprise through-holes. As shown in **FIG. 3**, receptacles **22, 24** are disposed adjacent and along opposing contoured joint line edges **26, 28** of outer cover portions **18, 20**.” Also see page 6 lines 7-14 which recite “[a]s shown in **FIGS. 3 and 4**, connector

platform **36** comprises a plurality of protrusions **38, 40** and extends along the face **30** of trim panel **10**. Also as shown, the pattern of the protrusions **38, 40** on the connector platform **36** extending across the face **30** of the trim panel **10** coincides with the pattern of receptacles **22, 24** located on outer cover portions **18, 20**. In the above manner, as shown in **FIG. 4**, protrusions **38, 40** mechanically engage the receptacles **22, 24** of outer cover portions **18, 20** when the protrusions **38, 40** extend into the receptacles **22, 24**.”

Support can also be found at paragraph [0029] of the published application which recites that the inner surfaces of the outer cover portions make contact with the outer surfaces of the connector flange portions.

Accordingly, no new matter has been entered.

Claims 1-2 and 13-14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Gill (USP 5,896,717). Gill appears to be directed at a means of interlocking two planks wherein a connection member interlocks with undercut zones along the edge of each plank. Gill does not teach or suggest a plurality of holes along a joint edge, the holes engaged by a plurality of protrusions on a connector platform, as recited in amended claims 1 and 13. Accordingly, it is submitted that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102 has been traversed.

Claims 2 and 14 depend directly from amended claims 1 and 13, respectively, and are believed to now be similarly distinguished.

Claims 1-4 and 13-14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Ravotti (USP 4,719,731). Ravotti appears to be directed at a partition system post cover. As noted above with respect to Gill, Ravotti does not teach or suggest a connector portion formed in both a first and second outer cover, each having a plurality of receptacles along a joint edge, the

receptacles engaged by a plurality of protrusions on a connector platform, as recited in amended claims 1 and 13.

Post Cover **C** is simply that, a post *cover* that attaches to holes in edge channels 5, which edge channels are an entirely separate piece (i.e. they are affixed to the side edges 4 of the panels). In that regard, as emphasized above, even if one interprets edge channels 5 to provide some connectivity through cover C, Ravotti teaches against the more efficient construction of having a connector portion formed in the first and second outer cover, as claimed herein.

That is, the adjoining panels of Ravotti are ultimately attached by a top hook **10** and a bottom hook **11** (see column 3 lines 4-21) which recite “[a] series of vertically elongated slots **9** are provided in each of the edge channel side walls **7** which in the past have served to provide attachment means for the mounting of appropriate arms or brackets allowing for the attachment of various partition accessories, such as shelving or bookcases.

As can be seen below in illustration format, the separately added slotted edge channels 5 provide attachment means for removably receiving a post cover **C**. The attachment of the panel **2** to the post **3** is readily accomplished by providing a top hook **10** projecting inwardly from the upward portion of each edge channel **5** and a lower hook **11** adjacent the bottom of each edge channel. The posts **3** are preferably cylindrical and hollow and this construction readily admits the top hook **10** into the interior of the post while the lower hook **11** may engage the interior of a cup **12** attached to the bottom of the post.” **FIG. 1** of Ravotti is reproduced below for the convenience of the Examiner. Note that “**C**” is simply a post cover and provides an aesthetic feature as described in Column 1 lines 41-46 which recite “[t]he present invention improves upon the construction of the above McCracken et al. device by providing a removable cover

Furthermore, Ravotti teaches that that the post cover C (to the extent that it may be interpreted as a connector) attaches to the front surface of the panel. In addition, cover C at best contacts only the edge channel 5. See, e.g., FIG. 2 where cover C as illustrated contacts only the edge channel 5. As noted, the claims herein have all been amended to recite that the inner surfaces of said first and second cover portion contact said outer surface of said connector platform

Claims 2, 4 and 14 depend directly from claims 1, 3 or 13 and are believed to be similarly distinguished.

Claims 5-12 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Muirie et al. (GB 2 061 350 A). This reference appears to be directed at a seal and a stiffening means between adjacent edges of rigid or semi-rigid sheets. This reference does not teach or suggest two outer covers including connector portions, the connector portions formed in and disposed along a respective joint line edge of each outer cover, the outer cover connector portions including a plurality of receptacles, and a connector platform which includes first and second connector portions which include a plurality of protrusions, and wherein the protrusions engage the receptacles. (See amended claims 5 and 8).

Claims 6, 7 and 9-12 depend directly or indirectly from amended independent claims 5 or 8 and are believed to be similarly distinguished.

For the reasons noted above, it is believed that the outstanding rejections under 35 USC § 102/103 have now been fully considered and traversed.

In consideration of the remarks hereinabove, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims currently pending in the application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Allowance at an early date is respectfully solicited.

In the event the Examiner deems personal contact is necessary, please contact the undersigned attorney at (603) 668-6560.

In the event there are any fee deficiencies or additional fees are payable, please charge them (or credit any overpayment) to our Deposit Account No. 50-2121.

Respectfully submitted,

/ Steven J Grossman /

Steven J. Grossman
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No.: 35,001
Customer No. 32047
Grossman, Tucker, Perreault & Pflieger, PLLC
55 South Commercial Street
Manchester, NH 03101
Tel.: (603) 668-6560